

Message Text

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ACTION DHA-05

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 OMB-01 AID-05
CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00
NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AGRE-00
EB-08 TRSE-00 /099 W
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P 021353Z NOV 77
FM USMISSION GENEVA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2597
AMEMBASSY ALGIERS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY
INFO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 GENEVA 09622

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF, AG, SS, MO
SUBJECT: UNHCR AND SAHARA REFUGEES

REF: (A) ALGIERS 2641, (B) RABAT 5784

1. FOLLOWING IS ATTEMPT TO RESPOND TO QUESTIONS RAISED
REFTELS CONCERNING POSITIONS TAKEN AT OCTOBER 4-12 UNHCR
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING CONCERNING SAHRAOUI REFUGEES,
AND PRESENT STATE OF PLAY AS SEEN BY UNHCR SECRETARIAT.

2. ALI MAHMOUD'S STATEMENT (REF A) WAS DISTRIBUTED AS
A SAHRAOUI RED CRESCENT DOCUMENT UNDER THE LETTERHEAD
SAHRAOUI ARAB DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC, DATED SEPTEMBER 20,
1977 TO THE MEMBERS OF THE UNHCR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.
HIS PROBLEM WITH THE RESOLUTION ADOPTED AT THE EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEES 27TH SESSION (OCTOBER 4-12, 1976) UNDOUBTEDLY
STEMS FROM THE FACT THAT THE COMMITTEE, IN AN EFFORT TO
BE EVEN-HANDED, SIMPLY TOOK NOTE OF STATEMENTS MADE BY
ALL PARTIES TO THE ISSUE AND DECLINED TO ADOPT A POSITION
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ADVOCATED BY THE ALGERIAN REPRESENTATIVE ON BEHALF OF THE
SAHRAOUI CAUSE. THE RESOLUTION READS AS FOLLOWS: QUOTE:
THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE,
(A) TOOK NOTE OF THE REPORT AND STATEMENT BY THE HIGH
COMMISSIONER CONCERNING THE HUMANITARIAN ACTION WHICH
WAS HIS CONCERN IN THE TINDOUF REGION;
(B) TOOK NOTE OF THE STATEMENT MADE BY THE REPRESENTATIVE

OF ALGERIA WHO, REFERRING TO THE MANDATE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, LAID SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON THE NEED TO CONTINUE AND URGENTLY TO STRENGTHEN THE ASSISTANCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO THE SAHRAWI REFUGEES IN THE TINDOUF REGION PENDING A PERMANENT SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM;

(C) TOOK NOTE OF THE STATEMENTS MADE BY THE OBSERVERS FOR MAURITANIA AND MOROCCO WHO DREW SPECIAL ATTENTION TO THE FACT THAT MEASURES WERE CALLED FOR WITH A VIEW TO VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE APPEAL MADE BY THE HEADS OF STATE OF MAURITANIA AND MOROCCO; AND WHO DECLARED THAT THE PERSONS IN QUESTION HAD BEEN BROUGHT AND DETAINED AGAINST THEIR WILL;

(D) NOTED WITH SATISFACTION THAT THE REPRESENTATIVES OF ALGERIA, MAURITANIA AND MOROCCO HAD PROMISED THAT THEIR GOVERNMENTS WOULD CO-OPERATE CLOSELY WITH THE HIGH COMMISSIONER IN ORDER TO ENABLE HIM TO ACCOMPLISH FULLY HIS ROLE;

(E) REQUESTED THE HIGH COMMISSIONER TO CONTINUE HIS PROGRAM OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND AT THE SAME TIME TO UNDERTAKE DISCUSSIONS WITH THE GOVERNMENTS WITH A VIEW TO THE SPEEDY IMPLEMENTATION, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE USUAL POLICY OF HIS OFFICE, OF PERMANENT SOLUTIONS INCLUDING VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION AND DURABLE SETTLEMENT. END QUOTE.

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3. FOR ADDRESSEES INFORMATION, REPORT OF UNHCR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE'S 28TH SESSION ON THIS SUBJECT WAS, BY MUTUAL AGREEMENT, AND AFTER PROTRACTED DEBATE, EVEN MORE CRYPTIC. QUOTE: WITH REGARD TO THE HUMANITARIAN ACTIVITIES OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER DESCRIBED IN THE RELEVANT PARAGRAPHS OF DOCUMENT A/AC.96/539, THE COMMITTEE TOOK NOTE OF THE STATEMENT MADE BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF ALGERIA (CF A/AC.96/SR.287) AND THE STATEMENTS MADE BY THE OBSERVERS OF MAURITANIA AND MOROCCO (A/AC.96/SR.287 AND 291), AS WELL AS THE HIGH COMMISSIONER'S REPLY TO CERTAIN QUESTIONS. "THE CHAIRMAN STATED THAT THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE WAS CONCERNED ONLY WITH THE HUMANITARIAN ASPECTS OF THE REFUGEE PROBLEM. ITS MAIN OBJECTIVE, LIKE THAT OF THE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME OF UNHCR, WAS TO ALLEVIATE HUMAN SUFFERING THROUGH PROVIDING ASSISTANCE AND TO PROMOTE DURABLE SOLUTIONS IN LINE WITH THE POLICY AND PRACTICE OF UNHCR, INCLUDING THE VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION IN SATISFACTORY CONDITIONS FOR THE PERSONS CONCERNED AND THEIR DURABLE SETTLEMENT. THE CHAIRMAN EXPRESSED THE WISH THAT FURTHER PROGRESS BE MADE TOWARDS ACHIEVING DURABLE SOLUTIONS TO THIS PROBLEM AND THE HOPE THAT THE HIGH COMMISSIONER WOULD CONTINUE HIS EFFORTS IN THIS REGARD. END QUOTE.

4. AS CONCERNS REF B, OCTOBER 13 MAP VERSION OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE SESSION STATEMENT IS ESSENTIALLY CORRECT. AT OCTOBER 6 AFTERNOON SESSION, FETTERED BY EXTENDED AND HEATED DEBATE BETWEEN ALGERIAN REP (BOUDJAKDJI) AND MOROCCAN OBSERVER (SKALLI), LATTER PUT TWO QUESTIONS TO HIGH COMMISSIONER:

A. IN EARLY 1977 MOROCCAN PERMANENT MISSION HAD SENT TO HIGH COMMISSIONER 14 REQUESTS FROM FAMILIES IN MOROCCAN SAHARA ASKING UNHCR TO INTERVENE TO SEEK RETURN OF SOME FAMILY MEMBERS THEN IN ALGERIAN CAMPS IN TINDOUF REGION.

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NUMEROUS FOLLOW-UP INQUIRIES HAD FAILED TO PRODUCE REPLIES TO THESE REQUESTS AND HE WISHED HIGH COMMISSIONER TO STATE REASONS FOR THIS.

B. UNSYG HAD DECIDED SEVERAL MONTHS EARLIER THAT CENSUS SHOULD BE HELD OF THOSE ORIGINATING IN SAHARA FORMERLY UNDER SPANISH ADMINISTRATION. REFERRING TO MOROCCAN AND MAURITANIAN AGREEMENT TO THIS CENSUS, SKALLI ASKED HIGH COMMISSIONER TO INFORM HIM WHAT HAD PREVENTED SYG'S DECISION FROM BEING CARRIED OUT.

UNHCR SADRUDDIN AGA KHAN REPLIED AS FOLLOWS ACCORDING TO SUMMARY RECORD OF SESSION (DOC. A/AC.96/SR.287). QUOTE:
ON RECEIPT OF THE 14 FILES IN QUESTION, HE HAD IMMEDIATELY TRANSMITTED THEM TO THE ALGERIAN AUTHORITIES, THROUGH HIS CHARGE DE MISSION IN ALGIERS. HE HAD BEEN ASSURED THAT

THE MATTER WOULD BE DEALT WITH, ALTHOUGH SOME TIME WOULD BE REQUIRED.

"WITH RESPECT TO THE QUESTION REGARDING THE CENSUS, THE UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL HAD INFORMED HIM IN THE SPRING OF 1977 THAT, AS A RESULT OF DISCUSSIONS WITH THE CONFIDENTIAL

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PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES IN NEW YORK OF THE COUNTRIES CONCERNED, HE WISHED UNHCR TO CARRY OUT A CENSUS OF THE SAHRAWIS IN ALGERIA AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE. ACCORDINGLY, UNHCR HAD PREPARED A TECHNICAL NOTE WHICH IT HAD TRANSMITTED TO THE ALGERIAN AUTHORITIES ON 18 MAY.

" THE ALGERIAN AUTHORITIES HAD REPLIED THAT THE MATTER WAS UNDER CONSIDERATION AND THAT HE WOULD BE INFORMED OF THE RESULTS ONCE A DECISION HAD BEEN TAKEN. END QUOTE.

SKALLI THANKED THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HIS REPLY, WHICH, HE SAID ENABLED EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE TO MAKE CLEAR ASSESSMENT AND WAS MORE ELOQUENT THAN ANY SPEECH.

5. PRESENT SITUATION WITH RESPECT TO SAHRAOUI REMAINS ESSENTIALLY AS REPORTED EARLIER (GENEVA 7256, 6702, 4993 (NOTAL), 4972 (NOTAL) AND 4803 (NOTAL)) INSOFAR AS UNHCR IS CONCERNED, I.E. IT IS STILL AWAITING ALGERIAN GOVERNMENT SIGNATURE OF LETTER OF REQUEST FOR FOOD ASSISTANCE, AND GOA AUTHORIZATION TO VISIT CAMPS FREELY AND TO CONDUCT CENSUS. ALL CONCERNED HERE WOULD AGREE WITH ASSESSMENT OF SITUATION AS "A MESS", DESPITE SEEMINGLY SINCERE EFFORTS OF ALGERIAN AMBASSADOR HERE TO ELIMINATE ROAD BLOCKS. MISSION UNDERSTANDS THAT CONTINUING IMPASSE IS SOURCE OF PERSONAL EMBARRASSMENT TO HIM. UNHCR'S PROGRAM OF ASSISTANCE TO SAHRAOUI REFUGEES PRESENTED TO 28TH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE INDICATED COMMITMENTS OF \$1.0 MILLION IN 1977, PLUS \$1.7 MILLION IN FOOD COMMODITY CONTRIBUTIONS AND PLEDGES (INCLUDING WFP), AND A BUDGET OF \$2.3 MILLION FOR 1978. THESE COMPARE TO OBLIGATIONS OF \$2.4 MILLION FOR THIS PURPOSE IN 1976.

6. FOR ALGIERS: WE ARE ADVISED THAT ARNAOUT RETURNED TO ALGIERS LAST WEEK AND WOULD NOW BE AVAILABLE TO DISCUSS ISSUE SHOULD EMBASSY DESIRE.

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7. NOTE: FOURTH WORD FROM END OF LINE THREE, PARA 4 SHOULD READ FEATURED, RPT FEATURED VICE FETTERED. VANDEN HEUVEL

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Message Attributes

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Decaption Note:
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